

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety / Ill-treatment

11 June 1999

VENEZUELA

Edgar Almeida, aged 17

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Edgar Almeida who is in hiding after reportedly escaping from police detention after being severely beaten and threatened with death.

On 26 May Edgar Almeida's mother, Carmen Lucía Luna, answered the door to three policemen from the *Policía Técnica Judicial* (PTJ), Criminal Investigation Police of Cochechito, a suburb of Caracas, who said they had come to arrest Edgar because he had been accused of rape. When she asked if they had an arrest warrant they told her they didn't need one and forced their way into the house. Realising that Edgar was not there one of the policemen told his mother to bring him to the *Centro de Detención de Menores Cochechito*, (The Cochechito Youth Detention Centre), otherwise they would be back for him.

The next day Carmen Luna and Edgar went to the Comisaría de Cochechito (Cochechito Police Station), with a representative of a Venezuelan human rights organisation, *Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz* (Support network for Justice and Peace). When they tried to discuss the matter with one of the policemen who had come looking for Edgar the policeman apparently became very aggressive, shouting at them and insulting them when they tried to speak. Edgar Almeida was detained by the PTJ and sent to the *Instituto Nacional del Menor* (INAM), National Youth Institute in El Valle to undergo a forensic medical examination.

Carmen Luna was then told that Edgar would be released from police detention on 31 May, but when she went to collect him the police told her to come back two days later. Again he was not released, however. When Carmen Luna went to INAM they told her that Edgar was being treated for colic. They also said that he had been hit by another inmate and that he was being transferred to the *Clínica Mucuruba*, Mucuruba Clinic, in Paraiso for treatment.

On 3 June they told her that Edgar had escaped and that they were now looking for him and that he had been vomiting blood. A few hours later Edgar was able to call his mother. He said that two of the PTJ policemen who had originally come looking for him were threatening to alter the charge against him so that he would go to jail where they would torture and kill him unless he paid them a sum of money. He said he was willing to go to trial to prove his innocence but that he wanted to be assured of a fair trial.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has repeatedly complained to the Venezuelan authorities about the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment and the lack of safeguards provided to people held in preventive detention. This is exacerbated by a law which allows police to legally detain people in custody for up to eight days before having to bring them before a judge and by the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators.

Amnesty International has also received numerous reports of ill-treatment, torture and deaths of people detained by military and security forces.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- calling for immediate and effective measures to be taken to guarantee the safety of Edgar Almeida;
- calling for a full, impartial and prompt investigation into the circumstances surrounding his arrest and detention, including reports that he was ill-treated and threatened with torture and death by those responsible;
- requesting that the results of any such investigation are made public and that the perpetrators are brought to justice;
- reminding the government of its commitment to young people through the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which Venezuela has ratified.

APPEALS TO (please note that fax tones can be difficult to obtain):

President of the Republic of Venezuela
 Coronel Hugo Chávez Frías
 Presidente de la República de Venezuela
 Palacio de Miraflores
 Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams: Presidente, Caracas, Venezuela
Faxes: + 582 864 8239
Telexes: 21161 MIRAF VC
Salutation: Dear President / Señor Presidente

Minister of Home Affairs
 Ignacio Arcaya

Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores
 Carmelitas a Santa Capilla, Caracas, Venezuela
Telegrams: Ministerio Relaciones Interiores, Caracas, Venezuela
Faxes: + 582 862 7516 / 864 4334 / 576 8719
Telexes: 29694 MRI
Salutation: Dear Minister / Señor Ministro

Attorney General of the Republic
 Dr. Iván Darío Badell
 Fiscalía General de la República
 Manduca a Ferrenquín, La Candelaria
 Caracas 1011, Venezuela
Telegrams: Fiscalía General, Caracas, Venezuela
Faxes: + 582 577 2144 (if voice, ask for a fax tone, dar me un tono de fax por favor)
Salutation: Dear Doctor / Estimado Doctor

Criminal Investigations Police/ Policia Técnica Judicial (PTJ)
 Dr. Carlos Fermin
 Director, Policia Técnica Judicial (PTJ)
 Esquina de No. Pastor, a Puente Victoria
 Ed. Parque Carabobo PB, Caracas, Venezuela
Telegrams: Policia Técnica Judicial, Caracas, Venezuela
Faxes: + 582 574 0972
Salutation: Dear Doctor / Estimado Doctor

COPIES TO:

Support Network for Justice and Peace
 Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y Paz, Parque Central, Edif. Caraota, Nivel 2,
 Ofic. 220, Caracas, Venezuela, tel/Fax: + 582 574 8005
 Emails: redapoyo@compuserve.com
Director of Human Rights at the Attorney General's Office
 Dra. Emilia Este de Guédez, Director de Derechos Humanos
 Fiscalía General de la República, Manduca a Ferrenquín
 La Candelaria, Caracas 1011, Venezuela

and to diplomatic representatives of VENEZUELA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 July 1999.